

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 12, Vol. XXX.]

DECEMBER, 1856.

[Whole No. 360.]

SERMON DCXCVI.

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NEW YORK.

IT IS GOOD FOR A MAN THAT HE BEAR THE YOKE IN HIS YOUTH.

"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."—LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH iii. 27.

YES, it is good for a man, that he bear the yoke—bear it always: not in his youth only, but in his manhood, and old age, bear it, and carry it, patiently and cheerfully all his life.

Youth, we will all admit, is the forming period of human character—the time when impulse and restraint—when check and spur—when indolence and effort are most largely influential for good or evil over our future condition and destiny. And yet, it is true, that always, and everywhere, and under all conditions, the will of man must bow to a Higher Will: it must submit itself to an omnipotence mightier than its own. Man must always acknowledge a Law—a Sovereign—a Might and a Right, out of, and above himself, or he fails in the healthful and proper unfolding of his nature: he loses the dignity and nobleness of his humanity. His life and character, without this, take a wrong direction—a twist, a gnarl, a bend, which distorts and deforms both. Man must always be governed and restrained. Look at a child! It has hardly gained strength to erect and hold itself up, before its will expresses itself in actions and wishes which show you *how* much the neck of childhood needs, absolutely needs a yoke, a curb—a rein—a guiding and controlling power to keep that child in the

right way—to check it when it goes wrong, and to discipline it unto subjection to the law of right and duty, rather than the law of self-will and inclination. But does the child outgrow the need of this yoke? Does he not grow stronger, and sturdier, and firmer set in the opposition of his will, to all wholesome advices and restraints? Is not this the natural tendency? And the young man, full of the ardor and impulse characteristic of his age, does he not need a yoke—a disciplinary and controlling power of some kind? Where would his passions, his temper, his appetites, hurry him, blindfold and headlong had he no safeguard—no check or restraint? And the man, the wise, sagacious, practical man, who has outlived the follies and fervors of youth, has he, therefore, outlived the necessity of imposing upon the neck of his inclinations and passions a yoke—a bond—a fastening to hold him to the law of duty, and high and holy endeavor, rather than to the law of self-indulgence and self-interest? And the old man—the very old man—who has passed his seventy or eighty mile-stones on his way to the realm of the dead, will it do for him to throw off the yoke? Is it safe for him to unloose from his neck the reins—to throw off all the restraints human and divine laws impose upon him? If it were safe—if the law of right had become the fixed law of this life—if his steps have been so confirmed in the paths of virtue and piety that they could not stray into wrong or forbidden paths—yet still does the old man need this yoke as much as ever. Does not age, with its infirmities and dependence—with its temptations to complaint and fretfulness—to irritability and impatience, and misanthropy, need the wholesome restraints of the Christian Yoke, to hold it uncomplaining and unmurmuring on its declining way—to keep it calm, and patient, and serene, and hopeful, till the last great change shall come, and death itself shall unloose the yoke.

But need I stop here to argue the truth of the sentiment expressed in the text—that *all men*—but especially the young, do need, imperatively need, some sort of discipline and restraint—some coercion of their own wills—a yoke to bind and fasten their activities and energies in the right line of endeavor—to regulate and restrain all their faculties of thinking, willing, and doing within the right path—the grand highroad of religious duty that leads to God and blessedness. Will not every honest mind acknowledge, and that, too, with a strength of conviction forced from the profoundest depths of self-consciousness, that the human soul is in a disordered, wayward, and fallen state—wrong in all its natural propensions, and passions, and dispositions, and, therefore, unfit to guide and govern itself—unable, without a leader and a guide, *out of itself* to begin or end the journey of life aright.

While man was a sinless being—while he was a dweller beneath the clear sky of Paradise—his faculties did all spontaneously de-

velope themselves, in exact and beautiful harmony with the law of holiness and love, through which God in His beneficence and wisdom works out the happiness of His intelligent creatures throughout the vast universe. But in laying down rules for the conduct of life *now*—in chalking out the course of education and discipline which will best develope his nature—we must never forget that that nature *now*, is nature in its fallen state—a nature inclined to evil—a nature which though upright as God made it, it has by the abuse of its free-agency, by voluntary transgression, ruined and disabled its original powers and capabilities for good—a nature, which though jarred and disordered in all its higher and nobler instincts, still it is a nature which God our Father seeks to restore again unto Himself, and to the dominion of his own most holy law by the discipline of labor, trial, suffering, and the still higher discipline of the cross.

Human life is educational and disciplinary. It is a period of probation and preparation. Nor can we understand all its grand ends and uses, till we have fully grasped the idea of its *why* and *wherefore* upon the earth. Improvement, and not enjoyment, ought to be the end and aim of our lives.

"Life is combat—life is striving,
Such our destiny below!
Like a scythed chariot driving
Through an onward pressing foe,
Deepest sorrow, scorn and trial,
Will but teach us self-denial!
Like the Alchemists of old—
Pass the ore through cleansing fire;
If our spirits would as-pire,
To be God's refined gold."

Correction, amendment, right moral and spiritual development is the true business, and ought to be the great labor and struggle of our earthly life. Earth, this sin-shadowed earth, is the place for labor and toil. Heaven, the holy and calm heaven, the place for rest and fruition. And he who strives and expects to find rest and enjoyment only in this life, but lays himself to sleep upon a bed of roses, whose thorns will sooner or later pierce him to the quick. Labor, discipline, and the patient wearing of the yoke, is the true way of life—a way whose ending is lost amid the beatitudes and blessedness of heaven. But the human soul prefers to follow its own impulses. It dislikes to submit its own will to any higher will. Subjection is painful to it. Domination, rule and power over others, it delights in. It dislikes obedience. It spurns labor. Wayward, self-loving, and self-willed, it seeks its own, and not that which promotes the happiness of others, or even its own highest ultimate good.

And how shall a young soul, setting forth on the journey of life, be *broken in*—be habituated to bit, and bridle, and check—

to the healthful, and wise restraints of virtue and goodness? When shall the taming and training process begin? Can it be commenced and carried forward hopefully, unless it is begun early—begun in youth? With the Prophet, we believe it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Perhaps no greater calamity can befall a young man, than to be *lord of himself*—his own master—to acknowledge no will, no law, no authority, higher or more obligatory than his own. This was one of the main elements of Lord Byron's misfortunes—one of the most productive sources of that waywardness and self-will, which marred and spoiled his whole life. Speaking of Lara, whose father died when he was but a child, he says:

"Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,
Lord of himself, that heritage of woe,
That fearful empire which the human breast,
But holds, to rob the heart within of rest,
With none to check—and few to point in time
The thousand paths that slope the way to crime!
Then, when most required commandment—then—
Had Lara's daring boyhood govern'd men.
It skills not—boots not—step by step to trace
His youth through all the mazes of the race.
Short was the course its restlessness had run,
But, long enough, to leave him half undone."

Now here we have the secret element of all that frowardness which manifested itself in so many ungainly forms in the life and history of that majestic but erring man. And we may lay it down as an axiom that whenever we find a youth restiff under wise and just restraints, or irreverent and reckless of the opinion or good feelings of others, there is an obliquity in the moral nature of that youth, that will, sooner or later, unless checked, work out evil and sorrow to himself and others. In Byron's own words, to be *lord of ones-self*—to own no interest, no law and no restraint, but his own self-will—is to a youth, a "heritage of woe." And hence, indeed, one of the deepest sources of sympathy for the young, who in early life are deprived of a father's wise and kind restraints.

But let us enquire concerning that discipline—that particular and peculiar kind of yoke, that can manage and shape human life and character aright, so as finally to evolve the perfection and symmetry of the soul, bring it ultimately into everlasting harmony with goodness, the end of its creation. Let us begin with the beginning of life and notice in their natural order the several yokes, which all human souls must successively put on and wear, according to their age and condition, before the habits of the soul's life can be permanently conformed to the law of holiness—the law of its happiness.

First, then, the yoke that must be put on the earliest is, the yoke of parental obedience—implicit, unquestioning obedience.

And grievously does that parent sin against God and the soul of the child God has committed to his care, if he neglects to enforce daily and habitually this great law of his child's social and moral welfare. Is it not a melancholy sight—indeed, does it not excite one's indignation and pity—when you see, as one often does see, a spoiled and petted child—the little tyrant of the family, governing and ruling both the father and the mother—subjecting them to its capricious will—making them the pitiable slaves of a foolish and mismanaged child—a four or five year old despot! How often do you see a child you could have loved, had it been left unspoiled in the innocence and childish simplicity of its nature, and trained to that teachableness, and obedience, which always mark an interesting and promising childhood. But sit half an hour in that family circle! See how concerned and timidly the mother puts forth her commands, fearful they shall be openly disobeyed and she be put to shame by her young child in the presence of strangers. And mark the egotistic teasing, selfish, obdurate, overbearings of the young one. By turns it is noisy—by turns fretful and sullen—a being, which God gave as a blessing, a light, a very joy to that family home, has by the ill-timed indulgence and mismanagement of its parents, been changed and metamorphosed into a shame and a reproach, and a prophet of future evil to itself and others. Alas! how has the glorious image of God, stamped upon that young child's nature, been defaced by a bad and foolish home training! You can plainly see that instead of the seeds of kindness, gentleness, modesty, and self-control, cast by parental hands into that young soul before you, the dragon's teeth have been sown. You cannot smile upon such a child kindly. You cannot speak to such a child lovingly. Its frowardness and self-will repel you. And when *you*—when others—when patient and painstaking instructors of the young, all turn away with a moral aversion from this unhappy victim of parental mismanagement and folly, who will pity and help it? Who, indeed, will or can? Shall we hope that some kind angel—some unseen, unearthly one, from the realm of the blessed—some guardian genius, such as of old men did believe watched over children and folded around them the wings of protecting love, shall watch and wait, and find some period, some favorable hour, to throw over that young child's nature, the regenerating and renovating forces of a lovelier and more genial life? Shall we dare to hope, that that work which is the father's and mother's work, shall be done by any other than the father's and mother's own hands? Shall we expect the blessing of the God of Families upon that household where the father and the mother, instead of being the priest and priestess of the household, are its victims—where, instead of keeping the yoke of a wise and gentle obedience around the necks of their children, they wear the yoke of a child tyrant around their own? Solemn, indeed, and heavy is the re-

sponsibility of the office of the instructors and educators of the young. Oh! they do need wisdom, and patience, and Divinest sympathy to fit them and sustain them in their toilsome and difficult work. How much of authoritativeness and absolute command must be exercised in that small kingdom, a school-room, where twenty, thirty, forty, or a hundred active and inquisitive young minds are ever on the stretch to know or to do some new thing.

And here, too, the youth who has been trained to habits of docility and submission in the home government of the family, who has worn naturally, and gracefully, and reverently, the yoke of parental authority, is most likely to be benefitted by the efforts of an industrious and conscientious instructor. Oh! how unfit for the relative duties and business of life, is that young man or woman, who in the discipline of the family and the school has never been accustomed to wear the yoke of a dutiful and loving obedience! My young friends—you who are scholars and learners—you who now hear me, let me speak plainly and frankly to you. Is it not better and infinitely more becoming for a manly and noble boy, or a large-hearted and good girl, to say I will reverence and obey my parents; I will look up with respect and confidence to my teachers and parents, whose instructions and advice, if I heed them, can make me wiser and better. Is not this, I ask you, better than to be an obstinate, indocile, and unloveable girl, or a coarse, bold, bad and obstinate boy—the Anarch of the family—gruff and coarse, and unmannerly, mistaking impudence for manliness, and a vulgar swaggering air for the deportment of a gentleman. It is a most common error, and a dangerous one it is, that schools and masters are *the* educators of our youth. Their instructors they are: but their educators in the high, and holy sense of the word they are not. The training of the feet, and of the hands, and of the eye, and the ear, by music masters, and dancing masters, and drawing masters, is not education. The knowledge of the ancient and modern languages, and the sciences and fine arts, as taught by the best and most accomplished instructors is not education. That is something which neither the schools, nor books, nor masters, can give. The body is trained, and in many cases trained well, and so is the intellect. It is plied with tasks, and books, and lectures, and made strong, and sharp, and wise, and fit for the all absorbing ends of life; that is, for buying and selling, and making merchandize, and the accumulation of material good. But where are the professors of benevolence, justice, truth, temperance, humanity, charity, and piety? Where are these accomplishments taught? Who studies them? What are the text books? Where are the institutions and professors of these, of all accomplishments the most exalted, because the divinest? You, my hearers, let me say to you respectfully, who are parents are these professors, and your homes the insti-

tutions where piety, and justice, and benevolence, and humanity are to be taught, not from lectures, and homilies, and catechisms merely, but from the mystic book of your own daily lives. Not in colleges and halls of science, but in your households, you the father and the mother being the educators, and your lives and example the lessons.

But when the young have passed the period of training and tutelage in the family and in the school, have they then done with the yoke? Is it proper for them to cast off all obedience to restraint and authority? Far from it. There come yet harder lessons to be learned—there are severer rules to be obeyed—there is another yoke ready for the neck, and happy is the youth who is ready to bear it patiently and truly. It is the yoke of work, labor, industry—the burden which the occupations and professions of active life impose; and this yoke all must bear, as they value the peace, prosperity, and dignity of their future lives.

There are not, as some persons seem to think, a few favored children of the earth—the destined heirs of good fortune—the hereditary owners of such broad domains and ample resources, that they can afford to make life a long sunny day, an everlasting Saturday, a schoolboy's holiday. If any do have the vanity to live an easy, laborless life, without effort of any kind, without the application of their powers to some good and useful purpose, they soon fall into public contempt and personal littleness, no matter what their surroundings or position may be. Because a young man or a young woman is born to affluence, is that any good reason why he or she should be vain or idle? Is it not, indeed, the very strongest reason why they should strive by energy and perseverance in some noble line of endeavor to build up a personal character, in some degree commensurate with the outward fortunes which the good providence of God has given them to enjoy?

No, my young friends, if you would be truly influential and respected, labor diligently, and with all your skill and might in whatever industrial employment or profession the good providence of God has called you to work. This is duty.* There is true honor and dignity in this. No employment is mean which is honestly and industriously pursued. When the enemies of Epaminondas, one of the most renowned men of his age, appointed him a street scavenger, "*If my office,*" said he, "*will not do me honor, I will do honor to my office.*" And so he did, by the

* Alas! there is a most morbid dislike for work among all classes—and as morbid a wish to be gentlemen. I have seen it stated that recently in Boston, an advertisement for a young man to work in a store, had 18 applicants; while one for a gentleman to travel and play on the banjo received 409. I say work. It is honorable. There is true dignity in it.

conscientious and careful manner in which he discharged its appropriate but humble duties. An industrious man is usually a virtuous man. Hercules was an honest worker. His draining of marshes, and punishment of tyrants, and destruction of serpents and wild beasts, what are they, and the thousand and one fables told of him, but the fact that he was a true benefactor of his race, an improver of the social condition of men. The idler has never yet done any thing for the world's good; and in no one instance has his name, like to Vulcan's, or Hercules', or Orpheus', or Arachnes's been embalmed in mythus. It has rotted from among the memories of the ages. Bear the yoke of labor in your youth. Ours is a work-day world. Its only oasis is the Sabbath. Cherish that. *But work. Work for yourself. Work for your family. Work for the world.*

But you say, I do not know how to begin; I want capital; I want friends; I do not know how, or where, or when to set out, and make a beginning. Well then, these are embarrassing difficulties to be sure. But I do not know that it is right to say it is a hard condition; for this is but another yoke which it is good for a young man to bear in his youth—the yoke of adverse and straitened circumstances and conditions of life, for it is nobler to achieve ones fortunes, with God's good providence aiding, than to inherit them—nobler to acquire energy, and strength, and self-reliance, and manly independence of character by a severe and close combat with the evils and disadvantages of outward social condition, than to run the risk of being enervated and personally insignificant by entire reliance upon friends and influence, and capital which others have accumulated for you.

But when the young have learned the great laws of obedience and industry, is that all? Must the neck still bow itself to receive other yokes or restraints? It must. For men are not only members of families, and workers, and producers, in this great world-hive; but as youth merges into manhood, they become members of states and of civil communities, they become citizens. And now the yoke of subjection to civil authority must be borne with a self-sacrificing and patriotic spirit. But when the family and the school have done their proper and legitimate work, the state finds the majority of her subjects order-loving, obedient, and willing and ready to come up to to her help, in maintaining law and order, and the mercantile blessings of peace and good government. But from whence come her outlawed and disobedient children, who crowd her prisons, her jails, and poor-houses, and penitentiaries? Do they not come from disorderly, ill-governed, and mismanaged households—from dwellings where the Sabbath was a weariness, where religion was turned out of doors, where all their members lived as seemed to them best in their own eyes, and their youths were lords of themselves?

But, finally, is this all? Does obedience to parents—respect to instructors—diligence in some honest and useful calling, and loyalty to the State comprehend the whole of our duties as men? Are there no other yokes? Is there any other yoke, the assumption and bearing of which will not afflict and constrain, but set the young man free and lift him up into the full and joyful consciousness of entire personal freedom—perfect emancipation from the power and thralldom of all that is gross, or degrading, or evil in the tendencies of his nature, a perfect freedom to will and to do that which is right, and well-pleasing before God? Yes, there is such a yoke—a yoke worn by devout and good men without irritation, and without constraint—a yoke which is easy, and a burden which is light. *It is the yoke of Christ.* It is the yoke Christ offers to all his true and willing disciples through all the ages. *Wear but that yoke, now, and heaven will be all around you.* It is because men do not wear that yoke, that earth is earth—a low, dark, world of sin and suffering. Oh! glorious, indeed, would this house of our human life be, did we all but live as the children of God; obedient, trustful, fraternal, loving children of the same great household of human souls, bound each to each, and all to God our Father, by the blessed and everlasting bonds of faith and love! Did every man but wear this yoke, its redemption would be achieved. Order and peace, and the holy calm of the holy worlds would fall upon the human race, and earth be but one of the majestic apartments—one of the glorious rooms in our Father's house of many mansions.

Do you ask me what is this yoke of Christ's? I answer. It is the life—the spirit—the temper—the love of Christ. It is humility; it is forbearance; it is faith; it is charity; it is meekness; it is forgivingness: in one word, it is self-consecration—the consecration of your thoughts, your words, your bodies, your entire life unto God, a living sacrifice. This is what Christ your Redeemer, God manifest in the flesh, taught to his disciples and the world. It is the giving up of your will to him who "willed and all things were." It is the yielding up of your heart to that mighty heart of love, pulsating from the centre to the farthest verge of being; the God who made you, and the throbbings of whose love to you, you may hear in every beat of that heart of yours, and feel it in every generous and uplifting aspiration, that struggles in your soul for utterance and expression. Tell me, my young friend, when is a boy the loveliest? Is it not when confidently and trustful he walks, hand in hand, unquestioningly beneath the care of a wise and loving father, his will resigned to his father's will, his father's smile his joy, his father's word the law of his conduct, his father's life the model of his own. Oh, how happy that boy is! Happy in his father's love, happy in his own obedient, loving spirit. Heaven is all around him, for the heaven of trust and love is within him. And so, too, will it be

with you, if as the children of God's mercy and providence you wear the yoke of obedience to the will of your Father in heaven—if, like Jesus, you strive to do, not your own will, but your Father's will—if like Him you put forth a brave trust in providence—if like Him you grapple with the trials, and toils, and duties of life, as the ordained instruments of spiritual strength and perfection—if like Him, though you could "call down legions of angels," you go calmly to the dungeon, rather than give again blow for blow, or railing for railing, or "controlment for controlment," heaven will be around you, for the heaven of love and trust will be within you. Wear this yoke. Yes, wear it. And the promise is, "you shall find rest unto your souls." Rest then is the reward of wearing it. And what a blessing and what a reward it is! Ask the sick man what it is? Ask the thought-worn scholar, who has toiled till his brain has become hot and his pulse fluttering, what it is? Ask the seaman battling for his life with winds and waves, and the terrible phantoms of death striding along the boiling waters, what it is? Ask the conscience-haunted man—the man around whom the ghosts of remembered wrongs glide awfully silent, ask him what it is? Ah! it is rest—rest the sick man wants—the seaman wants—the sinner wants. It is rest we all want; rest from toil, rest from sin, rest from temptation, rest from the wrongs and evils of others. It is the cry of the human, We are weary! We are burdened! We are unhappy! Rest! Rest! Rest! We want rest! And it is, and it will be the cry of the human, ringing and reëchoing for ever through all realms and through all ages, until it is found in God and obedience to His will. "Bear this yoke," ye youth, "for a while, when you are young, that you may be free when you are old, that you may walk through life unmanacled by passions, unchained by lusts, spurning the lash of Satan, and deriding the bondage of sin, that you may come to that holy and happy land where no yoke is borne, where the souls of just men are illumined with amazing glory, and compassed round about by the holiness of God."* In the language of Gilfillan, in his Third Gallery of Portraits, "Almost all the powers and elements of nature, combine in teaching man the one great simple word, 'bend.' 'Bend!' the winds say it to the tall pines, and they gain the curve of their magnificence by obeying. 'Bend,' gravitation says it to the earth, as she sweeps in her course round the sun, and she knows the whisper of his ruler, and stoops and bows before the skyey blaze. 'Bend,' the proud portals of human knowledge say it to all aspirants; and were it the brow of a Bacon or a Newton, it must in reverence bow. 'Bend,' the doors, the ancient doors of heaven say it in the music of their golden hinges, to all who would pass therein. And the Son of Man Himself, although he could have prayed to

* Sidney Smith.

His Father, and presently obtained twelve legions of angels, had to learn obedience, to suffer, to bow the head, ere as a king of glory He entered in. 'Trust thyself.' No! Christianity says, *mistrust thyself—trust God*. Do thy humble duty, and call the while on the lofty help that is above thee."

May God bless you all, young men,* and help you to wear Christ's yoke which is easy, and to bear his burden which is light.

SERMON DCXCVII.

BY REV. JOSEPH MCKEE,

NEW YORK.

THE LAW OF INFLUENCES.†

"Am I my brother's keeper?"—GENESIS iv. 9.

MAN is a social being. An isolated state is an unnatural state. The life of the solitary and the hermit is a moral solecism in the history of society. We are bound to each other by many a mystic tie. Sever but one of these ties and the soul is unhappy. We can hardly conceive of a more pitiable object, than that of a man who feels himself an outcast from the sympathies and regards of his fellow-men—an outlaw from the love of God and the friendship of men. It is not good for man to be alone. God hath made his human children brethren. He hath made every man his brother's keeper. This is a most cheering and consolatory fact in the moral organization of society, but it is also a fact of the most impressive character. This relationship of soul to soul and heart to heart does involve responsibilities and issues, awing and deep as the depths of eternity.

The moral constitution of man and of human society most impressively tells us, that God will not hold *him* guiltless who worketh injury or hurt to his brother, for though the earth may hide and cover up that wrong, that injury, that evil deed—be it what it may—hide in the deepest depths of secrecy every mark of that deed, yet is there an eye that looketh ever into that man's face, and a voice that ever calls to him, "*Where is thy brother—what hast thou done unto him?*" His sin finds him out. It drags him a guilty, fear-haunted man before the tribunal of immutable and eternal justice. We may not and cannot evade the corresponding obligations, which the moral and social relations that bind us to each other, do impose upon us.

* Preached before the young men of Rev. Dr. Scott's Church, Newark, Nov. 18, 1855.

† Preached in the Allen-street Presbyterian Church, New York, Jan. 30, 1848.

In the struggle of life, the august Ruler and Judge of human actions has linked the great army of humanity shoulder to shoulder, and rank to rank, by mutual helps and mutual wants, so teaching us we should be mutually useful and helpful to each other.

And either helpful or harmful we are. No one stands so completely alone as to be without power over others for good or for bad. And no one stands so far removed from the influence of others, as to receive neither benefit nor injury from their influences over himself. We cannot live without influencing others, and others influencing us. Human society is a vast network of reciprocal influences. Every body acts, and is acted upon in turn. Every man helps to mould and fashion the character and destiny of every other man within the sphere of his attractions. It is this power of action and reaction—this reciprocity of moral influences that makes every man, to some extent, his brother's keeper.

I am not made a ruler and an overseer over my brother's household, or over his business. I am not responsible for the preservation of his health, or the integrity of his estate. These must depend upon himself, and on the great general laws over which I have no control. I have nothing to do with them. But I am responsible for the influence I may exercise over the health of his soul—of making or marring his condition in that vast and solemn future that lies in its awful stillness before us. I am responsible for the good or bad I have taught him, by my example, my conversation, and my daily walk and life. I am responsible too, for whatever of evil in his person, character, or estate, he may have suffered directly or indirectly from me, through the instrumentality of others.

I shall endeavor to unfold these views of human relationship and responsibility.

I. And first; I remark that this law of spiritual influences—this reciprocity of action and reaction in the moral world is universal. It is an admitted law in the psychology of our spiritual nature, as certain and invariable in its workings as the laws of matter and motion in the material world. Every effort of the mind we put forth has in it an energy which may be felt by other minds, numbers without number, reproducing itself in endless and ever widening circles of action.

There is a moulding process going forward in churches, in families, in schools, in all the busy places of trade and commerce, in the very streets—a play of moral affinities between mind and mind, and heart and heart, invisible, it is true, as the affinities that preside over chemical changes and phenomena, but equally sure in working out its legitimate results. When I throw a stone into a quiet lake, it produces a series of concentric circles, widening

as they depart from the centre, until the disturbing force seems lost or spent by the resistance of the water. But when I can no longer detect these circles, is that force spent or annihilated? No such thing. Feeble as it seems, it goes on and on to increase the momentum of the waters of the lake. This is intelligibly and plainly illustrated by that law in physics, entitled the hydrostatic paradox, according to which, any force, however small, impressed upon any confined mass of water, however large, is communicated to every drop in that entire mass, each acting and reacting on each until the whole is in motion. You lay your hand on ocean. Its pressure affects every drop of that world of waters. You wave your hand in the air—that motion disturbs the entire atmospheric mass. True, you are not conscious it is so. You cannot see these wavelets or circles. They are no objects of your senses, but where the senses fail to aid you, you can bring the higher instruments of analysis and enquiry to their assistance—instruments which exhibit to us results both wonderful and impressive.

A distinguished savant in making experiments on the Lake of Geneva, for telegraphic purposes, found that the blow of the hammer of a bell, struck under water, put in motion the entire water of the Lake, a weight equivalent to three hundred thousand millions of pounds of water, every drop of which moved in its turn—each acting and reacting on the other, and that too with an energy sufficient to affect a thin iron plate connected with his instrument, on the other side of the lake, a distance of twenty-seven miles, and so as to cause it to sound.

Indeed, if the doctrine of permanent impressions, as expounded by the author of the Ninth Bridgewater Treatise, be true, every impulse communicated by a man's hand to the ocean, or the earth; nay, every undulation of the air, occasioned even by his voice, produces a succession of waves which nothing short of the annihilation of matter can stop.

Now, we say a similar law obtains in the statics of the soul. Every man's moral nature presses on every other man's moral nature with a definite intensity. Our actions and influence are not confined simply to those immediately around us. They travel on to infinity. They affect others we have never seen—others who are to live long after we are dead and forgotten by the living.

The liberty, laws, and institutions of this country, are, for example, the results of the thoughts and lives of men we have never seen. We inherit their thoughts. We are what they have made us as a nation. The same too may be said of the youth of a family, of a school, and of a neighborhood. Their characters, attainments, and conduct are, to a large extent, the worked-out results of the companions and circumstances with which they are surrounded. And what is true in this limited case is true the world over. The words spoken by a man in a public lecture room or

the newspaper paragraph he indites, may affect hundreds of minds in China, in India, in Africa, or the Isles of the Sea. It may set in train a series of actions that will travel on, and on, and on, for ever! It is this that invests a man's actions and character with a significance both awing and limitless. This truth, indeed, sometimes stands out before the world's eye in gigantic proportions. Every age produces some master mind—some man "in shape and gesture proudly eminent," influencing for good or evil the destinies of millions of his race. Moses for example was one of these men.

And when the imagination stretches itself away back into the shadows of the past, that venerable sage, standing with his rod by the rock of Horeb, or coming down the rugged steep of Sinai to the congregated hosts of Israel, amid the awful thunderings and lightnings, and the still more awful trumpet voices that accompanied the delivery of the moral law—that venerable sage is the most commanding figure which the past presents to the mind's eye—a prophet, a warrior, a poet, a legislator—the only man of all our race that talked with God, as friend talks with friend—a teacher of religion, who though dead, still speaks to us of chaos, and creation, and the world wide flood, that swept away the elder brothers of our race.

Hume was another of those men that have "towered with Atlantean shoulders" far above their fellows. But he stood among them as the fabled Java tree, beneath whose shadow no creature can live, and round and about which the bones of the dead lie bleaching in the sun-light. Those irreligious trains of thought he set in motion, are drifting, and will drift for ever, through thousands of minds in many lands, peopling them with spectred doubts and deep fixed scepticism. The man may die out of the memory of men, but the trains of thought he has originated and set in action, possess a vitality and a momentum coördinate with his being. And every man is, in his place, a Hume or a Moses to some other man—a guide to the better world, or the moral Upas—the poisoner and the destroyer of the spiritual health and beauty of some other soul. It is true, the influence one man exerts over another man may not, and does not, always lie open to human observation. Still every man is as a city set upon a hill. He will be observed. He will be imitated by some subaltern or other in the school of good or bad morals. He will model some other mind. He will give to some other mind its peculiar moral physiognomy. And whether we can mark that moulding process or not, it does not escape the burning search of the Omniscient, in adjusting the moral value of the lives of each.

II. The good or the evil a man does lives after him. Each individual, living, self-conscious soul is a centre of moral power, a radiator of spiritual forces, either good or bad; for nothing is

neutral, nothing indifferent, or trivial, which helps to fashion souls and takes hold on the vitalities of our inner life, and thought, and feeling. Go where we may; do what we will; assume whatever style and stamp of character we choose: place ourselves in every possible social condition, high or low, rich or poor, we do throw off from us, and draw after us, and receive upon ourselves in return, trains of influences, which are infinite in their number and consequences, influences which mould and modify character, and therefore determine immortal destinies. The out-worked results of this law we cannot estimate now, either with respect to ourselves or others. Not until the day of the revelation of all secret and hidden things, shall we know the full amount of good or evil, which had its starting point in the moral workings of our own lives, or of the lives of those who made with us the journey of life. We have no means of analysis or observation, by which we can solve the problem.

Now the workings of this law of mutual influences, we cannot evade, because such is the moral and social constitution of our nature. The human soul is so plastic, its susceptibilities so delicate, its sympathies so subtle and acute, that one mind cannot come in contact with another mind, without both giving and receiving influences of some sort or another.

We cannot be thrown into the society of our fellow-men by the calls of business or pleasure; we cannot be united to them by the ties of kindred, and family, and friendship, without leaving our moral mark after us—the godlikeness we have caught by reflection from the life of our Saviour, or the dark shadows and stains which sin, and pride, and passion, have cast upon our moral nature.

This machinery of moral causes, ever in active and unceasing play in forming character, is truly inexplicable and wonderful. The very thoughts that are now rising up and struggling for expression in my own mind—the thoughts, too, that are rising up and drifting through your minds now, in your seats, as you sit here, all calm and unexcited, may produce the most important results on other minds in other ages. Like those rivers that sometimes sink and disappear, running for a time in concealed and under-ground channels, gathering force as they go, and then gush up to the sunlight again in irrepressible fountains of living water, scattering themselves in a thousand directions over fields far away from the place where they disappeared; so may our thoughts and doings this day, and all the days of our lives run under ground, as it were, and come flashing up after long intervals in multiplied and manifold forms of virtue or vice, of beauty or deformity, of worship or impiety.

For example. If under the impulse of a holy and generous thought you do this day make the resolve to live a better and more consistent Christian life, and if you do actually express that

resolution in action, by repressing the uprisings of anger, pride, passion, and every form of sin. If you chasten your spirit into obedience. If you mould your life and conduct after the divine model of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will set in action through your family and through your neighborhood, unacknowledged it may be, and undiscoverable by human eyes, but spread you will, the vital forces of a godly and spiritual life—forces that are destined to make the pulses of many a soul to beat hopefully and happily with the excitement of devout thoughts; nay, more, that shall make some other soul the spring and source of blessed influences to others, onwards and around, in an endless progression of usefulness and goodness.

You cannot live and die a good man, even in the lowliest and humblest walks of human life, without leaving your moral likeness struck into the memory of some one, who has seen and recognized in you, the beauty and divinity of goodness. Your example shall wake up the aspirations of some other soul, and that shall move another, and that other one shall send the accumulated moral movement on, and on, and on, to some other soul, what soul you know not, I know not. It may be the strong athletic soul of a second Washington, or the earnest and dreamy spirit of some future Bunyan, or the mighty and majestic mind of another Milton, speaking as with the tongue of an Archangel, of chaos, and night, and creation; of man, and sin, and redemption, until he commands the audience and the homage of all nations and of all times. Yes, those very mental and moral characteristics of your life to-morrow, originated and produced by your to-day resolves, may run along the nerves and tissues of a hundred generations, and, for aught you know to the contrary, be worked up into the moral texture of another Washington, or a Bunyan, or a Milton, or a Voltaire, or a Danton, or a Napoleon, or a Robespierre.

My hearers, we are all too inconsiderate here. We think too lightly of our own individual personal influences on each other. The greatly good, the awfully wicked and profane, the powerful, the learned, the wise, the mighty, the rich, we say have influence. But we, *we* are too weak, too insignificant, too busy, while we go the daily round of our obscure and common lives to do either much good or much harm to our fellow men. Our faults and follies will die with us, and our virtues, if we have any, will soon perish out of the history of the race. But it is not so. Each does act alone, and by himself, and powerfully too, in modifying the lives and characters of others. We have, indeed, of late put so much confidence in collected associated efforts for the good of mankind—so accustomed ourselves to the heavy machinery of social benevolent movement in the church and elsewhere, that we have come to regard *this*, as the only lever by which the moral world is to be moved. This is a gigantic error. We all know that the most vigorous public efforts in the direction of virtue and

humanity fail, when the heart and life of the doer are not in them nor in harmony with them. We often see the personal, well known character of an individual exerting a secret influence for mischief and evil, and much more powerfully too than any good influence he can exert, through the instrumentality of the most eloquent and able speeches. We must know that the sentiments that the man utters are the honest expressions of his own moral life before they can influence us. If his life and his precepts are in marked antagonism, he is as a teacher of morals powerless. It is the life and not the lip, the every-day home character and not the stage performances of the man, that go down the deepest into the heart of social life for good or evil. It is not the mere force of collected public effort, but the individual, personal influence, each giving the right tone to these efforts that must regenerate society.

III. But while I say this, I admit that the many associated and in many cases, the well directed labors of societies for the suppression of vice, and the amelioration of human wretchedness are among the boast and glory of the age. One association after another lays about it manfully. This one belabors that vice, and that one some other. Still comparatively little is accomplished. The blows of each tell upon the social wickedness of any given period, nearly as much as the blows of the Geologists' hammer upon the stability of the mountain rock. The error lies here. We are all in too great a hurry to reform others before we have thoroughly reformed ourselves—before we have acquired such a conception of right and duty as will spread itself with a felt omnipresence over the entire field of human responsibility. The world is not to be made morally better by mere associated labor companies, as one would drain a marsh or clear a forest. A work profounder, deeper, and more earnest than all this is needed. Each must be the actor and the subject, the reformer and the reformed, before the great heart of the world can be cleansed. Did every man realize *for himself* that his conduct is not narrowed to the sphere of his individual movements, but that it takes hold on all time, on all place; nay, more, that it passes forward into all the ages of the future, strengthening the moral discipline of some soul, confirming those habits of order, reverence, and self-government, that will fit *that* soul to strike a seraph's harp with a seraph's devotion, or sink it into a deep and yet a lower gulf of misery, thrust in upon its own unhallowed thoughts, and surging passions, amid the hauntings of conscious guilt and the agonies of hopeless despair? Did every man realize this, how soberminded and blameless each would strive to be in his deportment and intercourse with all around him?

Did every man but realize this one solemn truth, My thoughts, my example, my actions, are all indestructible and eternal as my soul—I say, did every man but realize this, our world might blow the trumpet of jubilee for its ransomed captives, and the whole universe of mind break forth into singing and gladness. Then

would every man feel that a stain upon his own or his neighbor's soul was not like a breath stain upon glass, or a finger-stain upon a book—a temporary obscuration of its brightness—an accident that can easily and hastily be remedied, but as a guilt stain and a hurt which nothing can either remove or heal but the power of Redeeming Love, the all-sufficient and cleansing virtue of the blood of the Lamb of Calvary.

Finally, if this be so, and it is a fact every man can easily prove or disprove by his own observations, our human life is not to be gauged merely by great deeds done, or by bold and prominent traits of character. The most effective energies of nature are all noiseless and gentle. The power, for example, that binds atom to atom, and world to world, and wheels the planetary systems of this vast universe in their appointed paths, is yet so gentle as to roll together the dew-drops and poise them each glittering on its own blade of wheat in the sunshine. It is not the fervid heats of the summer sun, nor the loud-voiced winds, nor the heavy rain-storms, nor the electric fires, leaping from cloud to cloud, that carry forward the vast interests of terrestrial life. But it is the low, soft breezes, and the gentle showers, and the warm, kind sun, and the quiet dews that clothe the earth with verdure and fill the habitations of man with plenty and gladness.

Though every man is a teacher to his neighbor, yet it is not the man that wields the thunderbolts of Sinai as a terrorist, that makes the profoundest and widest impressions. It is by the exhibition of a pure Christlike love for man, and for his spiritual interests. It is by the right culture and reform of our own moral and intellectual natures, by the undimmed beauty of our lives, by infusing into the thoughts of others aspirations after goodness and heaven, by scattering around us the seeds of truth and right doing, in the humble, lowly and reverent trust, the good Husbandman and Shepherd of Israel will enable us to gather in our sheaves to the harvests of celestial blessedness with songs of praise and everlasting gladness. This is the kind of teaching that will go down the deepest into the human heart, and evolve from the most abandoned materials of humanity, thoughts, desires and hopes, clothed with celestial beauty. This is the resurrection voice that will start up earthly and stupid slumbering souls with the vital forces of the Christian life burning and glowing within.

What is it that has changed the moral aspect of the Christian world during the last 1800 years? Not simply the great sacrifice on Calvary. But the words of surpassing power uttered on the Mount of Olives—by the banks of the Jordan—by the sea side—in the streets of Jerusalem—by the well of Samaria—at the table of the Pharisee—beneath the sycamore tree at Jericho, and in that sad hour that preceded the scenes of Gethsemane. It is the mysterious energy of these words that has wrought such changes in the moral aspect of the world, and wherever they have been re-

peated, whether on the banks of the Tiber, or of the Thames—of the Hudson or the Ganges; they have become centres of refinement and human progress, and wherever they have been believed in and obeyed, they have excited a new life, even the life of God in the soul. And to cherish these thoughts in our inmost hearts, and to express them truly and lovingly in our actions is the grand mission of our lives. Wherefore let us see to it, that our lives are on the side of right, and goodness, and humanity. It will not do for us to cheer on, and to strengthen by our example and our influence, some weak brother in the direction of a bad habit, or of a wrong way of life, and when he falls a victim in the struggle, to seat ourselves down, and like the old prophet in the bitterness of unavailing regret over the man we have deceived, to say, "*Alas! my Brother.*" And if we are vain, showy, irreverent, unworshipful, lovers of pleasure more than we are lovers of God—hasting after this world's honors as our chief good, we will have our imitators—the diligent disciples of the same school of fashion, or frivolousness, or pleasure, to which we belong. So, too, if we are humane, gentle, spiritual, earnestly, and thoughtfully seeking after the Kingdom of God, and its righteousness—if our piety be the free, unstudied outgoings of our hearts—zealous, without being fanatical—reverential, without being superstitious—earnest and constant, without hypocrisy, and guileless, we must from the law of influences we have thus far endeavored to illustrate, make vice abashed in our presence, and the profane, and the abandoned, though we utter not a word, feel, nay, even mourn the loss of virtue, for there is in true goodness, an awfulness and severity of beauty, which claims even the homage of a lost archangel. This power of Moral Influences, is a talent entrusted to us all. It is this that makes every man his brother's keeper—every man the guardian and fashioner of his neighbor's life and manners to a certain extent, and by the right or wrong use of which, we are instrumental in introducing the kingdom of light and life, or the kingdom of darkness and death—spreading around us circles of ever widening, and ever onward influences for good or for bad—dropping into some soul thoughts that will send it upward and heavenward, or cause it to gravitate downwards, and still downwards into abysses of self-shame and moral desolateness.

And now in conclusion, I would say to Young Men—to all who are beginning life's mystic march—you who are to be the example and the guides of the generation that is to follow you—tell me, if the doctrine I have attempted to unfold be true—and no man can disprove it—are there not grave and weighty responsibilities resting on you to be virtuous, upright, sober, right-living, and right-doing men? The youth of any community express the moral state of that community, for intelligence, virtue and goodness. If the heads of families in a community, love order, virtue, piety, and

peace themselves, the youth of the community, generally, will express it by the sobriety of their lives—by their respect for the civil and religious institutions of the land, and above all, by their love of goodness.

Now, whatever the cast and character of the youth may be, that are to rise up, when you have passed off from the scene of action, depends mainly on you. You are to be their instructors, their guides, their moral and religious keepers. Your piety or want of piety; your love of right and goodness, or love of self; your sober-mindedness, or your love of irreverent mirth, will multiply and enlarge itself, and give their moral expression, to the youth that are to come after you. It rests with you to say what it will be—whether it will be the expression of moral beauty, or of moral ugliness. That this must be so from the nature of the social relations is most plain. I will suppose a case for illustration's sake. Suppose a young man is a gambler, a dram drinker, or a swearer. Do not suppose these terms are below the dignity of the Pulpit? Whatever concerns the moral welfare of the youth of a community, that most legitimately belongs to the Preacher, and it is his right to speak—be silent who may. He is not to be a mere man-pleaser, but to warn, rebuke, exhort, instruct, and win to virtue and to God, as God giveth him grace and power.

Well, who made that young man a gambler, a swearer, a drunkard, or an immoral man? Most assuredly his guilt is the result of imitation and companionship. He learned to gamble, and swear, and drink, and be immoral, just as you learned your trades and professions, *from others*—others who taught him, and learned him, and cheered him on, by their example, their sneers at virtue, and piety, and soberness; their irreverence for the Sabbath, for the Scriptures, for the Church. They are just what their models and teachers have made them. Oh! better, if a man has by his influence, his example, or his sneers against virtue and religion—better, I say, for that man, if he knows of any man made a gambler, or an intemperate man—made so by his influence or example, better for him to travel, though it were to the ends of the earth, upon his bare feet, and beseech him to be a new man in Christ Jesus, than to meet that man's face in eternity—a dark soul-ruin, the workmanship of his hands.

Well, indeed, did Paul say to Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

And equally earnest and emphatic are the words of Peter, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Even so may it be. Amen.

"I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you. I have been thinking of you very much lately, and wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are well and happy. I have been very busy lately, but I have managed to find some time to write to you.